

Avondale Mills Project

Interviewer: Edward Akin

Interviewee: Jessie Tidwell

December 2, 1980

A: This is an interview with Ms. Jessie Tidwell in her home in Stevenson on December 2, 1980. I thought what we'd do to get over the nervous jitters and all that was just to have you start out with telling me what you know about your family before you were born. You know where they came from who your mother and daddy were. This sort of thing. I was just asking for you to tell me about your folks you know what you know about where they came from their families.

T: Well, my grandparents on my father's side came from Georgia now what part I don't know but they were from Georgia but my mother was from Alabama, Guntersville.

A: Yeah. And, now I notice you were born in Boaz.

T: Yeah, I was born in Boaz.

A: Were they living there at the time?

T: Yeah, yeah we were living in Boaz out in the country.

A: Yeah, from out from

T: Out from Boaz. Lived on a farm.

A: And so do you know how your mother and dad had met? Did they ever? Had he grown up on Sand Mountain?

T: No, he hadn't. He had come over visitin I believe she said. Some of his relatives lived there and he had visited there now he had met her like that.

A: Now when did they marry? Do you know what year?

T: I forgot. I tell you I hate that.

A: Now you were born in 1918. Were you the oldest child?

T: No, I'm the fourth one. There were nine of us and I'm the fourth one. I have a we're all a livin the children are living but my mother and dad both dead.

A: Now where are your sisters and brothers now?

T: I have one sister lives here and I have one that lives in Guntersville, one brother, one brother that lives in Albertville, and I have two sisters and one brother that lives at Boaz and I have one sister that lives in Oneonta.

A: Spread out.

T: This sister that lives here just moved by here recently from Roswell, Georgia. Her husband died and she moved back here.

A: What was it like growing up in such a large family?

T: Oh, it was fun cause we all had something to do and I don't know it was just really fun I think to be a large family.

A: At that time did your Dad own his own farm or was he renting?

T: No, he owned his own farm.

A: Now how did you end up getting here from Boaz?

T: Well my brother in law and sister in law on my husband's side come up here. He come up here and he used to work for Avondale in Sylacauga years before that.

A: Now who was this?

T: Walt Sizemore. And he decided he would come up here and see if he could get a job at this plant so he did and they talked us into coming.

A: This was after your married.

T: On yeah after and so we come up but we wasn't happy here and we well we were gonna go back. They talked us into staying awhile longer so that what happened for about a year they'd talk us into staying. So then we both went and got a job at Avondale and went to work.

A: Before we get into your adult life, let's go back for a moment again talking about growing up. What was I noticed you had gone to school for awhile, did you go to country school?

T: Yeah, little two room schoolhouse.

A: Yeah, first through third and fourth through sixth?

T: No, it was all the way first through the twelfth in two rooms.

A: Really?

T: Yeah. That's the way it was and I went back here awhile back and we went down visitin and we went out there but of course they tore the schoolhouse down but I could just see it in my mind it still sittin there just like it was.

A: Well, what was it like then? I guess one teacher was teaching six grades?

T: One teacher she taught the first six grades and then the other one the other six and course they were just two rooms and we had a stove right in the middle of the room.

A: And what she'd just separate out the children in each grade?

T: Yeah, each grade.

A: Get one group to working?

T: And had a big bench up here at her desk and would call us you know each class up there. That's the way it was.

A: About how many children would be in a group usually? In one group?

T: Well, they would be different. Of course you know they had several schools around and that taken care you didn't have of course we had a room full two rooms full but they would be about maybe fourteen maybe sixteen something like that.

A: Do you recall anything about your teacher or teachers?

T: Yeah, I recall one of them, Ms. Chambers. We talked about her this summer and I went by her house. It's just still there. Yeah, she was a good teacher.

A: So you finished what? I noticed you got through the ninth grade.

T: Yeah, there.

A: Did you have drop out of school to help your family or there just wasn't a chance to?

T: No, I dropped out and married. I was real young. I married real young. Yeah, that's what happened.

A: So what about fourteen, fifteen years old?

T: Fifteen, yeah.

A: And so that would have, let's see getting my dates right, you would've that would've been about 1933.

T: Yeah.

A: Somewhere in there. Now, was it immediately after you married that ya'll came up here?

T: No, it was about two years, I guess, after let's see two or three years that we came on up here.

A: What were ya'll doing?

T: My husband worked at the depot. His father worked at the depot and he was working there with him.

A: There at Boaz?

T: At Boaz, yeah.

A: And, were you a housewife?

T: Yeah, I didn't work until we come up here.

A: Now, what year was it that your daughter was born?

T: She was born in 1934.

A: And you said that was your only child.

T: Yeah, that's my only child.

A: Yeah, so are there

T: And we come to Stevenson then in '37.

A: Yeah. Now, when you first came up here that would have been I guess your first experience with the textile mill.

T: Yeah, that's right.

A: What were, do you recall, some of your first impressions?

T: Well, yeah, my sister-in-law and brother-in-law went to work and of course then you could go in the mill and visit em and stay and they didn't care for you going in then and course I'd

take their lunch. We were living in the village over there and I'd take their lunch to them and of course I'd stay in and I decided I wanted a job but I didn't know if I could learn it or not. It looked too complicated. Anyway, Emmet Liner was the plant manager then and he told me if I wanted to of course I had to learn without any pay.

A: Yeah, that's another thing we aren't used to today.

T: You didn't get any pay for learning. Of course, I did I'd go in so many hours a day and I learned.

A: About how long did it take you to learn your job?

T: Let's see, it didn't take too long cause they didn't put you on a full job when they put you on just part of a job.

A: Yeah, now did that also mean I guess, was it by piece work at that time?

T: No, it was I went to work as a spinner what I did and it was so many sides that you run there wasn't no piece work that I saw not then.

A: But, what I mean did you get paid by the side?

T: Yeah, you got paid by the side.

A: Yeah, that's what I mean. So in other words then you'd work

T: You didn't make nothing.

A: Then you'd work yourself to what more experienced could do. About how many sides could a good spinner?

T: Well five then. That's what we had to run five. And, then they set it up course it was according to what fibers you was running as to how many but they finally set it up to where you run eight the better fibers you got the more you could run it.

A: Fewer breaks and that sort of.

T: Cotton, we was on cotton. You'd come out with out all over clothes and that's why were so happy when we went on this synthetic stuff.

A: One of the funny stories I head out of Sylacauga, a friend of mine was interviewing his wife's grandmother who had worked there at Avondale at Sylacauga and she was chuckling she said one time she said yeah, I'll never forget the time that I was talking to a friend of mine and that cotton yarn was breaking right and left and I turned to my friend said well you know what's

wrong, the Comers won't buy anything but cheap cotton. She said and I turned around and there was Mr. Donald just chuckling.

T: Oh, I'll never forget Mr. Donald. I just loved him.

A: Did he manage to get up this way quite a bit?

T: Oh he come up often and then I got to go on some trips with them spend a week or ten days and he would be with us.

A: What down at Camp Helen?

T: Yeah, Florida then got to go to Fort Myers and stay on a boat with him for ten days.

A: Wow, how big a group?

T: They was two of them from this mill here and there would be eight of us. Yeah, and he stayed on with us and we'd go fishing and just enjoyed it so much.

A: Well how would they decide which people got to go?

T: They would pick somebody from the mill. The supervisors would pick somebody.

A: Would it usually be according to how well you were doing your job. That sort of thing.

T: Yeah, that's the way they picked em and the ZD program they have I was picked I won and went to Disney World with them. I really liked Mr. Donald Comer.

A: Yeah. What are some of the things you recall say about Mr. Donald, and Hugh, J Craig Smith coming up here for things.

T: Oh I think they were just all wonderful. They would always come in and talk to you and tell you what a good job you had done and oh, we just always looked forward to them coming.

A: Yeah.

T: But it got where it wasn't like that you know. Of course, the older ones we always thought when the older ones were gone it would be different we used to think that years ago.

A: Yeah, I guess computers and more business, concerned with the bottom line that sort of thing.

T: And production they just have to but used to they would just come and we'd have they'd shut the plant down and we'd all meet and they'd talk to us and especially if there's anything went wrong well they always talked to all the employees.

A: To get the whole story.

T: The whole story and knew all the business and they'd tell us if there's anything you want to find out know about Avondale don't hesitate to ask. There's nothing that we keep secret from you. We'll always tell you anything the very best we can and it was I think Avondale to me has always been a good company to work for. I said I hadn't always had a lot but I always had a living and enjoyed working in my job.

A: Yeah, of course one of the special problems in your situation was being a working mother. What sort of things how did you handle that?

T: Well, I had a colored lady that stayed and I worked on the first shift and she'd come before six o'clock in the morning and she took care of my daughter plum on up till she got in high school and stayed. Of course back then it didn't cost much to have somebody.

A: Yeah, yeah and then once your daughter got in school of course there's wasn't as much concern.

T: No, there wasn't as much but she stayed here and took care of everything well not here really we lived over on until she got in high school and then after she got in high school I didn't have to have her.

A: Yeah. Now both you and your husband were working at the mill at that time. Both of you on the same shift I suppose. What room was he in? What part of the mill?

T: Yeah. He was in the card room. My job went right down. He was on the now let's see they changed the.

A: What they call the things now.

T: Yeah. They changed them the drawing room and my job went right down his went across this way and mine went

A: Yours picked up where his stopped.

T: Yeah, and that's the way we was. I said all the years we went to work together and come back together. We was always home at the same time.

A: Yeah, yeah.

T: And I said we worked right where we could talk to each other all day.

A: Yeah. Did, was this the case for a lot of folks, husband and wife both worked in the mill?

T: Yeah, it was it sure was they worked right there. Of course that mill wasn't a big mill then.

A: Yeah.

T: And it was just like one big family out there and especially after Mr. Lee Boles come.

A: Yeah, yeah.

T: Oh, Mr. Boles was home this summer six weeks.

A: Well in fact while he was up here I got to interview him.

T: Oh, sure enough.

A: I guess he and I talked for about forty five minutes which is one side of the tape and then I found out while I was talking to him that Mrs. Boles had taught in the Kindergarten at Sylacauga before they came up.

T: Yeah.

A: So when I flipped the tape, we got her to come in and she talked to us and I mean I guess he's well I know he's in his eighties, eighty one eighty two, and still just as sharp as a tack.

T: It broke my heart when Mr. Boles had to retire.

A: Basically you had been here, he came in '38.

T: He come after I did you see and you know I think what makes you so close to your supervisors see when we'd go to Camp Helen, we'd all we'd work together and he'd be right in with us and we'd go on vacation together and they'd be right with us.

A: Yeah. There wasn't any type of pecking order.

T: No, and I tell you everybody just oh they just thinks Mr. Boles is still Avondale.

A: Yeah, yeah. Well with none of the family here on the scene, he was pretty much the Avondale representative.

T: Yeah, and he was here a long time. I don't remember just well up until he could retire and but we all and I still think of him often.



A: Yeah.

T: When I come to Avondale and went to work we had just the lil old bitty lights hanging down in the mill on a string. Just lil old bulb.

A: Drop cord, drop lights.

T: Yeah, Just lil old bulb all over the mill now that's the way the mill was and I said I have really seen lots of change out there and the first changeover we made was when we went to bedspread yarn. Then we went back from that to just regular of course it was cotton but the regular finer yarn and of course the bedspread yarn was a bigger yarn and then went back to a finer yarn after that played out and then we went from that to this synthetic but that was really something course when we changed over to that they had to change all the machines but we tried to run until we could get the machines on the little machines on the little bobbins and course they just kept a very few of us in there and laid the rest of the off kept a few to get this started. So I was one of them and I remember them lil old bobbins would fill up in just about fifteen or twenty minutes. It just kept you so busy and I thought and I said oh, Mr. Boles.

A: So were ya'll doffing?

T: Yeah we were a doffing and of course what was in there was working together. They left so many with each job and I told Mr. Boles I said Mr. Boles I don't know if we'll ever do this course we changed over and we got the new machines and bigger bobbins and everything and everybody was real happy with it. I was because we didn't have all that lint.

A: Oh yeah.

T: Fuzz a flying. It would just be all hanging from the top all over your hair and your clothes. You'd just be covered.

A: But, that was what about the middle of World War II?

T: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Was that also when you went from five to eight sides?

T: No, now when we went from five to eight sides that wasn't on the synthetic.

A: That changes.

T: It wasn't that synthetic. It was in that cotton.

A: That was before that time.

T: That was before that and the bigger machines see they were so much bigger and longer that I think the most we ever run on that was five sides cause they were so much bigger and longer machines.

A: Yeah.

T: But finally course I don't want to get to the end of it before I got hurt but they teamed us up and they put me and a man together a running the job altogether and doing all the spinning and the doffing and the cleaning.

A: The whole process.

T: The whole process and I really enjoyed that part of it because he was such a good person to work with and we ours was just like team work and I could do the job and he'd go take him a break and then he'd to the job and he'd say Jessie you go take you a break or rest and course all of it didn't work out like that cause there's just so many people who can't work can't team up together like that. But he was Glenn Wilkerson.

A: Yeah.

T: And I guess we teamed up like that bout four years and he was really, really good to work with. He's still out there.

A: Yeah, but he's been around for quite a while because someone had told me that I needed to talk to him.

T: Yeah, Glenn's been there a long time. I don't know but he's not as old as I am. I believe.

A: Now, he's in the village right?

T: Yeah. The first house yeah let's see as you turn in the village he lives in that first house right there.

A: On the left.

T: But I tell them that I didn't know that I could have that there'd been anybody that I could have teamed up with and worked with like we did.

A: About when did they start doing that? Do you?

T: Oh let's see now. No wait see, I've been out two years in September and we worked together four years or little better than four years. Bout

A: About '74?

T: Yeah and I know one of the shift foeman said after I of course now before I got hurt a week and four days well see they got where they put up jobs on the board and you could sign em and the one with the most seniority get the job. Well they put this heat set in and it was an easier job than I had well I thought why stay on this when it's so hard and I can get me an easier job. So I signed it and I got it. He said Jessie, this Glenn, he said I don't blame you but I sure hate to see you go. He said I just don't know. Well, I said Glenn I'm go try it and if I don't like it ,I got two weeks. Well I worked a week and four days but I liked it. It was cleaner and the noise there was very litter noise. I didn't have to wear safety shoes and I didn't have to wear the ear plugs and it was just so much better down there and I liked it but I worked a week and four days and that's when I got my back broke. It was just I guess I just done this all this other for all them years till I just had my bones set in a certain way don't you?

A: Yeah.

T: That's what I told the doctor and it was just this that I had this thing. I told them I didn't stay long enough to know what everything was called. It was like a big wheel.

A: Like a big batter.

T: Wheel. It was iron but it wasn't that heavy but you had to reach under it and lift it up like this and hang it up to put your skein on it and then put that back down on it. But, the doctor said it was just the position I got my back in when I done it and that was just a week and four days after I come out of it. The fourteenth of this past September was two years and I haven't worked any since. They said there wasn't any way I could go back.

A: Now you were talking about the safety shoes and ear plugs. Did that come in with OSHA or were they already doing that before then that what Occupational Safety Hazard?

T: Oh, that had been long before then yeah. See different parts of the mill you had to wear safety and where there's a lot of noise you had to wear ear plugs and so down there, there wasn't a lot of noise and you didn't have to wear them.

A: Now maybe I'm seeing things that's relative, but I went through a mill that had a weaving and after the weaving room everything else sounded quiet.

T: Oh, yeah, I've been in a weaving room over in Albertville. I had a brother-in-law that worked there and they let me go in one time through it. I have been in a weaving room but yeah that's a lot of noise there isn't it.

A: Yes a whole lot.

T: But not our visa new spinning frames now we didn't have to wear ear plugs until they put the big ones.

A: Ok

T: They made so much noise until oh, you just couldn't hear yourself think.

A: That's what I was wondering about because the mill that I went through were using the old spinning frames which weren't that noisy.

T: Oh these were huge big motors. You could hardly hear yourself think and that's when we.

A: Now what would the safety shoes be for, doffing?

T: Doffing, winding dropping thing on you. Yeah.

A: Yeah, now you mentioned the change from cotton to synthetics, was the lint really as bad as people say?

T: As cotton?

A: Yeah, no, back in the thirties using cotton. People say that it was just really bad.

T: Oh, it was. It was terrible. Why it was just a flying and a blowing. They'd have to take the hose pipe and keep it blowed off. It would just come down and hang to the tops. Well your head would look like a cotton ball when you come out. You'd usually take your brush you know and try to get it off and of course you'd get it on everything you had in the house and course now the synthetic it you'd just about come out looking just like you was.

A: As clean as you went in?

T: Yeah.

A: Talking with Mr. Boles, he said that switching over from the cotton to the synthetic and getting into carpets was the best move that Avondale ever made up here?

T: Absolutely, I think so.

A: Did ya'll feel that at the time or was this just something later looking back you could see?

T: Well, we thought of course I don't know about the officials but the ones in the plant thought it was that at first.

A: Yeah.

T: Yeah. Course after we got it started and got it set up and everybody went back to work course it now laid a lot laid em all off but just a few. I was one it didn't.

A: Even after you got back to full production?

T: No, I mean while we were but then they called em back. Yeah. Well now it might have laid a few of em off that didn't get to come back.

A: Yeah, but most of them came back once they got cranked up.

T: Yeah and everybody.

A: Now was it a wholesale changer over or were they able to use some of the old machines?

T: No, they used some of the machines in the card room but for a long while.

A: Yeah, but the spinning stuff had to be changed over and they used the winders they had.

T: The spinning all had to be changed over, yeah and they used the winders they had. They didn't have to be changed but see they took a lot of it that the machines that were taken for the cotton they didn't have to have it for the synthetics didn't have to go through a lot of that and but the spinning was what cause it was such heavier the yarn was such so much heavier than the cotton that the machines wasn't not big enough.

A: Now how did the chain of command work at the time? Who was between you and Mr. Boles?

T: They wasn't nobody then between me and Mr. Boles.

A: Were you head of spinning or was there any such thing?

T: No, there wasn't any such thing as Mr. Boles was just over the whole mill and then of course we had men that kept things fixed and all that. Just Mr. Boles and the employees.

A: So you really didn't have to go to any chain of command sort of thing until Grace I guess was built and then you had two mills you had to worry about.

T: Yeah and of course then they started putting in shift foremans you know. We used to didn't have shift formans just had Mr. Boles and then all the employees. If there's anything you'd go to Mr. Boles. Course it's different now they have their foremans .

A: Now when you came in 37 how many shifts were operating then?

T: There were three.

A: Three already.

T: Yeah. Three shifts operating.

A: That's seems like it would have been a major change because only I guess well up until NRA in '33, Avondale only had one shift at all their mills. Then they went to two and then to the three.

T: Well, there were three here when I come here but see they didn't work many people. I guess I doubt if they worked fifty people on all three shifts.

A: Now did you start out on the third shift or did you start out on the first?

T: No, I never did have to work, I was lucky I never did have to work on third shift unless they would get in a tight and they'd talk me into I worked not many nights but I'd go in and help em out.

A: Yeah.

T: Of course that made me have to work two shifts but I have gone in a few times and when they'd be short of help and work but as far as having a job on third, I never did have to work on third.

A: Now we've already mentioned Florida. Did even back in the 30s were you already going down to Camp Helen?

T: Oh, they had that camp, no not Camp Helen now. They had another camp where Eglin Air Force it was over there and they just had tents big tents put up and yeah they already had that and then they got a chance to buy Camp Helen.

A: Yeah.

T: I don't remember what year but it was after that they bought it but we used to go down there and it was where Eglin Air Base is and they had just big huge tents set up but it was fun there too and then it got.

A: Would they just close the mill down for that time? What two weeks?

T: Yeah, no go for a week. They carried us on a bus sent a bus. They'd send a bus up here to get us. Yeah. Send a bus and I don't think it cost but about \$3.00 to go down there and stay for a week.

A: How many of the people usually took advantage of that?

T: Oh, quite a few. There'd be usually almost a bus load.

A: Bus load. Yeah.

T: Yeah. I guess I don't guess there's too many older people that was working there but what didn't go and everybody enjoyed it I think but then when they opened bought Camp Helen well they was a few years that they'd still take us on the bus, school bus and they.

A: And finally I guess everybody got cars and such wanted to be more independent.

T: We wouldn't go all the way in one day, we'd stop off at Sylacauga and stay at Beverly Hall they'd sleep us there at Beverly Hall put I don't know where they'd get all them mattresses to put on the floor and I can still remember oh, I think a lot of times about all them times and we'd and they'd cook for us that night and they had a wash tub full of wieners and hot dogs but oh we'd have it was just more fun.

A: Yeah.

T: And then it got well it was several years before that they carried the bus because I know my daughter and it got where we weren't working much. I know there have been a few times that we'd just work about one shift a week and then I'd pick cotton to try to make it and course we'd always let our daughter go. I told them she'd always gone to Camp Helen all her life course there'd be somebody a going. We wouldn't have the money for us all to go. They have been several times but we'd always manage to have the money for her to go and she still thinks she has to go every year too and my grandchildren has grown up at Camp Helen.

A: Yeah.

T: They still think the year can't go by without going to Camp Helen.

A: Yeah, that is a nice thing to have.

T: Yeah, course they ski and they have boats and they have the fishing boats that go out on and it still don't cost a lot for them to go down there and stay a week.

A: Probably the cheapest thing around.

T: For a family, sure yeah. I didn't go with them this summer, I went let me see last year anyway me and the grandchildren went for a week and then they wasn't even ready to come home. They wanted to stay two or three more days course we had to get us a place down the beach and stay cause they's always some different group in and I kidded them I told their parents when we got back I said I tell you they wasn't ready to come back when that week was up and they emptied my pocket book the next three or four days.

A: Yeah. Now you said, I'm trying to think of what we were saying earlier. Did you say that your daughter went to work at Avondale?

T: No, she's never worked at Avondale now her husband works in the High Jackson plant. He's a foreman on the third shift. Yeah, he's at High Jackson.

A: How long has he been with Avondale?

T: I guess he's been there about twelve years I guess or maybe no he's been there longer than that. He's been there about fourteen cause he was there before my husband died. He was with Burlington in Scottsboro.

A: Yeah.

T: Until he come here.

A: Who is he?

T: Charles Venable.

A: Oh yeah you told me.

T: Yeah until he come up here and he's at High Jackson and my grandson then he's working part time from school.

A: Now changing from the mill itself to other things that you did, I notice that you're a member here at First Baptist Church.

T: Yeah.

A: Had your family always been Baptist?

T: Yeah.

A: Growing up.

T: Yeah.

A: So when ya'll came here did you just start at First Baptist here?

T: Yeah that's right.

A: Well, this leads me to a question having seen especially Sylacauga, to a certain extent Birmingham, if you worked at Avondale Mills in Sylacauga you most probably went to Mignon Baptist Church, in Birmingham you went to the Packer Memorial and yet in looking at folks around here, they go to Edgefield, they go to First Presbyterian, they go to First Baptist there doesn't seem to be that separation of mill folk from the rest of the community here.



T: Yeah.

A: You know you seem to be part of the whole community. Is that right?

T: Yeah, that's the way. Now all the churches met Thanksgiving at the Methodist church for Thanksgiving on Wednesday night. All the churches met down there.

A: So Stevenson has a much wider what am I trying to get at. There's not that situation in Stevenson of seeing the mill folk as a separate thing.

T: No, that's not the way it is. I don't think so.

A: That's what I had felt was the situation too.

T: No, I think it's never been like that. It hasn't for me now.

A: For one thing it seems like a lot of the people who work here live out on the family farm drive in then drive back to the farm and maybe even do farming on the side.

T: Yeah. Now John Kirk he lived on a farm. I guess he told you about.

A: Yeah.

T: Yeah and I know John used to walk to work a lot and he lived way up in the cove cause I've been up there where John lived.

A: Yeah, McMann Cove?

T: Yeah but now I've always lived here in town somewhere here in town and not far from my job. I always said that I didn't believe I could get there at six o'clock if I had to drive a long ways.

A: That's right.

T: Yeah, I tell em I said I know when they opened up that DuPont in Chattanooga, well now there's we had several that quit and went up there and got a job and they begged us to go but they was going to drive back and forth you know had a van and they were driving, I said I don't believe I can do it.

A: It's like I have a cousin who's an iron worker and he lives down in Hollywood and he's been on projects at Sequoia and Nickajack and all over the place and have to be there you know at seven o'clock.

T: That's what I always told them why I just have to live close to my job to get there.

A: Yeah. That's the thing that's hard for me to adjust to because I've been talking to folks in Birmingham who worked at Avondale Mill there until it closed.

T: Yeah.

A: And of course most of the people who worked there lived right in the village next door to.

T: Yeah, I've been in that mill there.

A: And so they easily walked to work every day.

T: And you know when that mill closed up they shut it down well I thought oh I felt so sorry for them people you know that'd been with em so long and of course now you know the mill that I'm in over here it.

A: Mary Ann. It closed down.

T: Mary Ann Mill it closed down of course they still got the heat set in it and they give us all a choice they did me. I was the first one they called and talked to about a job. Of course they wasn't no way I could take a job.

A: Yeah.

T: But, the doctor wouldn't let me and but I thought oh I remember the Birmingham mill closing down but I never thought about this one closing down.

A: Well it was the sort of thing see I had my aunt and uncle went down and worked at Birmingham from the middle of World War II until it closed and so in growing up I'd go down there and visit and you know you never think about it closing.

T: No.

A: So then it closed the year I finished college and I went off to graduate school and I came back in '75 and they tore it down. Now when they tear the thing down, is when it really hits.

T: Well that's what they say they going to do with now when they talked to us but we tried we talked to em about just leaving it you know and but I don't really know what.

A: Well like when they tore down the Birmingham mill that's when I got off my can and started interviewing and talking to people because I knew that it wouldn't be long before the people in the village started dying, started leaving and then there'd be no history left you know what had happened to them.

T: Yeah.

A: But that's how I got started in this whole thing.

T: Sure nuff?

A: Yeah.

T: Well I just really didn't know what it was but I always enjoyed working for Avondale and I think Avondale is always been a good company to work for. Now that's the way I've always felt about it I really do but I've heard had a lot of people to say well they thought to change jobs that it was good for anybody to change jobs and everything and I said well I always felt like that that if I was gonna be in textiles that I was as good a place as they could be. Now that's the way I and I think that I come out to the good of doing it because.

A: Well you know when you first started back in the thirties there were a lot of job changes going on.

T: Yeah, I know it but I always stuck to mine and stayed then as I said I've seen lot of changes out there and course they'd add on maybe they'd want to expand Mary Ann and they'd build on to the front, they'd build on to the back , they'd build on to the side and I think they'd build on to the back again and it used to be just one little place in there. We used to have a pool at the side course they used to swim in it that was before I come then finally they put ducks in it and then they put fish in it but we would all meet go early you know or after we come out and we'd sit had a place where you could sit around. We'd all sit around the pool and talk. Mr. Boles would be right out there with us.

A: Yeah.

T: And they build a smoker outside and. course they'd let em go outside for I don't know maybe five or ten minutes and smoke.

A: Yeah.

T: And Mr. Boles would be out there with them and you know I think it really helped for him to mingle with the employees like that. I always felt like it did.

A: Yeah, it makes things on a much more personal note.

T: Yeah. I used to tell did you ever know Bob Sanders?

A: No.

T: Well, he was well he got after Mr. Boles retired well he was our supervisor and he was course I know things was making a change.

A: That one didn't work out very well.

T: No, things was making a change. Well, you know, I understand it now that they had to do something. They couldn't go on like it was and make money and still and course he didn't he didn't have anything you know like Mr. Boles he didn't mingle with us and course they started putting in shift foremans and that was the one we went to instead of him.

A: Yeah, but that didn't come in until Mr. Boles retired didn't it?

T: No.

A: That is something.

T: And so we it just never was like it was when we had Mr. Boles. Then we had Mr. Hal Sumners that got Bob. Now he is in Sylacauga now I guess cause that's where they sent him.

A: Yeah. I talked to him when he was up here because see he had started out at the Birmingham plant and at the time I was just working on Birmingham so I'd come up.

T: And then he went to, they sent him to Jackson, Georgia and from Jackson Georgia over here and over these mills and that one over there too and he was here awhile. Well, he'd talk because he knew I'd been there a long time and he'd talk to me a lot about it and I kept telling if things weren't a going right he'd say Jessie do you have any suggestions? And I said Mr. Sumners I think the best thing for you to do now I can see that like we used to do it. I said we used to have problems maybe things weren't going right in the mill well Mr. Boles would shut the mill down and he would take us all down in the packing room and he'd tell us the problems and he'd tell us we had to help him and he said I'll tell you one thing, if I go they're going to be some in this mill that going to go. He'd said ya'll can work with me and we'll solve this thing. Well we'd always do it. He used to tell em that I've got people at Stevenson can run bark off the tree and course everybody would always work good with Mr. Boles and I'd tell Mr. Sumners, Mr. Sumners I think if you'd shut that plant down and talk don't just talk to one or two like you come to me I said cause it never goes over to everybody else to just get it from one or two in the plant.

A: Yeah, yeah.

T: And I said I think if you'd shut this down and talk to everybody and tell em the situation and he said Jessie it may come to that but he said you know they just won't let us do that no more. He said we can't stop these machines.

A: Cut down stops production.

T: He said it stops production and there's just ain't no way we can do it and I said well I said the way I see it, I said it used to really work out. I said Mr. Boles I guess we was just all like his

children or something and he would just really lay it out to us just like it was and we got in there and we helped it and if we had a problem here at this mill and it was here well we would really work to help him and he knew we would.

A: Before I get to far away from it, I got something that's been nagging at me and I want to find out if I'm right about it. OK Mr. Boles by the time I saw him was white headed, what color was his hair before it turned? Do you remember?

T: It was seems like he kinda had gray hair when he come here some say. It wasn't black it was more of a brown.

A: OK. I was wondering. I was thinking it may have been red because he always had a thing several times during the interview with me he said when he first met Dick Bowder he said I picked that guy out as a real comer he said because I never met a redhead who wouldn't work.

T: No it wasn't red. Yeah, Dick was a good one. Now this is my daughter.

A: Hello.

T: Martha

A: Well this may be a good point to stop anyway. We're about out on that one.

END OF INTERVIEW